

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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*****For Immediate Release*****

Missing and Exploited Children Task Force Completes Third Year

The Missing and Exploited Children Task Force (MECTF) was created in 1999 within the Washington State Patrol (WSP) following passage of Senate Bill 5108, which was requested by Lieutenant Governor Brad Owen. The multi-agency task force is actively assisting federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and state agencies in the investigation of missing, abducted, and exploited children, on-line child pornography, and providing on-site assistance, case management, and training.

Since inception in October 1999, the MECTF has assisted in the investigation of 174 cases. As of this date the MECTF has participated in the recovery or locating of 95 children. In 2002 alone the task force assisted in 57 cases involving 76 children.

The primary case type handled by the MECTF during 2002 was investigations involving computers and allegations of on-line child pornography. The computer investigations resulted in three search warrants, six arrests, and 15 computers being seized. In addition at least ten individuals were identified trafficking in child pornography over the Internet and the information was relayed to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

In an effort to address public safety concerns about abducted children during this past summer, the WSP took a proactive approach, supporting the Amber Plan and facilitating efforts to establish the plan statewide. Personnel from the MECTF assisted in facilitating the process to establish the plan with interested communities by working through city and county law enforcement, local media, and interested community groups. Governor Gary Locke announced the activation of the Statewide Amber Plan on October 9, 2002.

"In 2003, the WSP will remain committed to making a difference with child safety issues in Washington State," said Washington State Patrol Chief Ronal Serpas.

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